# The Enemy's Surrender

by CHARLES G. D. ROBERTS

FROM the low window, framed in hop-vines, came light enough to light to bed so sleepy a traveller as I, so I troubled not at all to find the candle. Sitting idly on the edge of the couch, I pondered on the effort it would require to pull off my boots. A soldier and hardened to all shifts, I might, indeed, have slept as I was; but the bed was the best in the inn, and I cared not to vex my hostess's tidy soul by any such roughness of the camp. Even as I thought of it, however, my tired brain was flowing away into dreams.

Presently a head appeared close to the glass, and my fingers released the pistol. The head was a woman's, a young girl's it seemed, in the wimpled white cap wherein these girls of Acadia are wont to enshadow their bright faces.

"Jacques," she murmured, in a voice which my ears at once approved, "is it really you?"

"There's a mistake here, an interesting mistake," said my heart to me. But I let no such utterance rise to my lips. No, indeed. But my name is Jack—and no one could be supposed to think of spelling at such a moment. My conscience made no protest as I answered:

"Surely, dear one, it's Jack. Who else could it be?"

I spoke in a discreet whisper, for all voices in a whisper sound alike; and I blessed my stars that I had perfected my French since my arrival in Halifax. I put out my hand, but failed to find a small one to occupy it.

"Of course, I knew it was you, Jacques," the bewitching voice responded, "or you don't suppose I should have come knocking at your window this way, do you?"

"No, I should think not, *chérie*," I assented heartily, solicitous to cherish the maid's mistake and prolong the interview to the utmost patience of Fate. "But it was kind of you to come so soon."

This seemed safe and non-committal; but I trembled after I said it, lest some unknown revelation should be lurking in the words.

"I had to, Jacques, because I was afraid you might come to see me to-night——"

"I was coming," I interrupted, boldly mendacious, "but I was on the road all night last night, and thought I had better lie down for a soldier's forty winks, before I called."

She laughed, under her breath, provocatively.

"How your French has improved in these two years," she remarked with approbation. "I used to think you would never learn."

This was the first time I had seen Cheticamp village; but I felt safe in my reply.

"I was stupid, of course, *mon ange*; but after I was gone I remembered your sweet instructions."

This was dangerous ground. I hastened to shift it.

"But tell me," I went on, "what can you mean by saying I am not to come and see you? Surely you are not going to be so cruel, when I've been away so long."

"No, Jacques," she said, with a decisive shake of her pretty head, "you cannot come. Father is very bitter against you, and there would be a scene."

I began to feel that I had rights, which were being trampled upon.

"But what do you suppose I came to Cheticamp for?" I pleaded.

"Not merely to see me, that I know, Jacques," came the decided answer. "You could never get leave of absence just for that. You cold-blooded English could never make a woman's wishes so important."

"Couldn't we, indeed?" I protested. In my eagerness I leaned forward into the glimmer, seeking closer proximity to the fair, enshadowed face that seemed to waver off alluringly just beyond my reach. Then, in a panic lest I had revealed myself and displayed to her the error which I was finding so agreeable, I drew myself back hastily into the gloom. To cover my alarm I reproached her plaintively.

"Why do you keep so far away, sweet one? Surely you are glad to see me again."

She laughed softly, deliciously, under her hood.

"I haven't seen you yet, really, you know, Jacques. Perhaps you have changed and I might not like you so well. Men do change, especially Englishmen and soldiers, they say. But tell me, why have you come to Cheticamp—what reason beside to see me?"

"The business which gained me the privilege of coming where I might be once more blessed by the light of your sweet eyes, provoking one, was the need conceived in the heart of our good Governor of putting a stop to certain transactions with the French at Louisbourg, which, as you doubtless know very well, have laid all this Cheticamp coast under grave suspicion. Your people, I dare wager, are too wise to be mixed up in such perilous enterprises."

No sooner had I spoken than I realized that, for once, Truth had tricked me. I had better have trusted to invention.

"Thank you, Jacques. That is just what I wanted to know. You are so kind. Good-night."

The errand which had brought me from Halifax to Cheticamp, with six soldiers to support me, was one of some moment, and here was I already in danger of distraction, thinking of a girl's voice, of half-seen, mocking eyes, rather than of my undertaking. I got up, shook myself angrily, then sat down again to lay my plans for the morrow.

The old Seigneur of Cheticamp, Monsieur Raoul St. Michel le Fevre, had heartily accepted the English rule, and dwelt in high favor with the powers at Halifax. But he had died a year back, leaving his estates to his nephew, young St. Michel. It had come to the ears of the Government that this youth, a headstrong partisan of France, was taking advantage of his position as Seigneur to prosecute very successfully the forbidden traffic with Louisbourg. Great, and merited was the official indignation. It was resolved that the estates should be confiscated at once, and young Monsieur St. Michel le Fevre captured, if possible. Thereupon the estates were conferred upon myself, to whom the Governor was somewhat deeply indebted. It was passing comfortable to him to pay a debt out of a pocket other than his own. I was despatched to Cheticamp, to gather in Monsieur le Fevre for the Governor, and the le Fevre estates for myself. They were fair estates, I had heard; and I vowed that I would presently teach them to serve well the cause of England's king.

My first thought in the morning, when the level sun, streaming through the hop-vines, brought me on the sudden wide awake—as a soldier should wake, slipping cleanly and completely out of his sleep-heaviness—my first thought, I say, was of a shadowed face vanishing into the night-glimmer, and something enchantingly mysterious to be sought for in this remote Acadian village. Then, remembering my business and hoping that my indiscretion had not muddled it, I resolutely put the folly from me and sprang up.

I needed none to point out the house of the le Fevres.

"It shall not be changed by so much as one gooseberry bush," said I to myself, highly pleased with the prospect. Then, rounding a lilac thicket, I arrived at the open gate. And then, face to face, I met a girl.

The meeting was so sudden, and so closely did I confront her, that I felt my coming a most uncivil intrusion. Moreover, she was most disconcerting to look upon. Stammering apologies and snatching my hat from my head, I flushed and dropped my eyes before her—which was not in accordance with my custom. I dropped my eyes, as I say; but even then I saw her as clearly within my brain, as if my eyes were boldly resting upon her face.

The lady of the manor, evidently. I had heard there was a sister to the recalcitrant young Seigneur, one Mademoiselle Irène, over whose beauty and caprices had more than one duel been fought among the gallants of Quebec.

Presently I heard the sound of my stammering cease, and a soft voice, troubling me with a familiar note, said courteously, "You are very welcome to Cheticamp, Monsieur. My brother is away from home, unhappily, but in his absence you must allow me the honor of taking his place as your host in my poor way."

I looked up and met her eyes fairly, my confusion lost in surprise; and on the instant my heart signalled to me—"It is none other than the maid of the window! Take care!"

Yes, I saw it plain. Yet I should never have known it but for a perception somehow more subtle than that of ear and eye—for she had disguised her voice the night before, and her dress had been that of a peasant maid, and the bright riddle of her face had been in shadow. I perceived, too, that she felt herself safe from discovery; and that it was for me to save her blushes by leaving her security unassailed. In all this sudden turmoil of my wits, however, I fear that I was near forgetting my manners.

"But—Mademoiselle—" I demanded bluntly, "how do you know who I am?"

"It is the part of the conquered to know their conquers, Monsieur," she answered, in a manner that eluded the bitterness of the words. "But, indeed, the place of an English officer, on duty that is doubtless official, is here at the Seigneury, and not at the village inn. We cannot let you put a slight upon our hospitality."

But I was stubborn. That deed in my pocket weighed tons. Yet my inclination must have shown in my eyes, plainly enough for one less than Mademoiselle Irène le Fevre to decipher it. A little air of confidence flitted over her face. Nevertheless, I shook my head.

'Most gracious lady," I protested, "you honor me too much. It will delight me to learn that your brother has been maligned"—and in this, faith, I spoke true, forgetting the contingent peril to my pocket, —"but were he never so innocent it would be my duty to take him to Halifax, for the Governor himself to weigh the evidence. The irony of life has sent me here as your foe, not as your guest."

"Then, Monsieur, come as a foe who but observes the courtesies. Come with your hands free to arrest my brother at any moment on his own hearthstone (he is far away from it now, praise Mary!) or to arrest your hostess either, if your duty should demand that unkindness."

Her strong, little eloquent hands were clasped in appeal,—and who was I to deny her? But I looked into her eyes; and I saw in their childlike deeps, underneath the mocking and the feigning, a clear spirit, which I could not bear to delude. I understood now very plainly her mad game of the night before. She was unmasking a danger for her brother. I justified her in my heart; but for my own part in the folly I felt a creeping shame. How lightly she must hold me. This thought, and a sense that I was about to hurt her, brought the hot flush to my face; and I looked away as I spoke.

"But, Mademoiselle—forgive me that I bear such tidings—the estates of Monsieur Raoul le Fevre, Seigneur of Cheticamp, are confiscated to the Crown."

"Mademoiselle," I cried, more passionately, perhaps, than was fitting, "do not misunderstand. The confiscation does not apply at once, of course, and you are still absolute mistress here. If your brother be proved innocent, the decree of confiscation may be revoked. So it will now be held in suspension. You will, I am sure, permit me to go through the form of visiting your house, to convince me, as the Governor's emissary, that Monsieur le Fevre is not there. Then I will return to the village and see to it that my men shall cause you no annoyance or embarrassment. I dare not ask you to pity me for the duty that has been put upon me."

"You are a generous enemy, a chivalrous enemy, Monsieur," she murmured in a low, earnest, slightly strained voice. Then she recovered her lightness. "I am almost your prisoner, in a sense, am I not? A suspect, certainly. If I accept your leniency, and profit by your permission to stay here under my confiscated roof, do not make me die under this weight of favor. Be my guest and let me feel that I am not the only one in debt."

Was this the same woman, this half mocking, all irresistible creature, she whom I had seen gray-faced with hopeless trouble not three minutes before? Said I to myself, "If I pit my wits or my heart against hers, it is all up with me. Blank truth is my only hope." Aloud I said, "I will be your guest, Mademoiselle, though the debt in which I so overwhelm myself is one from which I can never again get free."

For this acquiescence my reward was just a look of a brilliancy that made me catch my breath with pleasure. With a gesture that bade me to her side she turned and moved slowly up the path, between the shining copiousness of roses.

"I will send a servant with your orderly to the inn, Monsieur," she said, "to fetch your things. Our old walls will be glad to shelter again a soldier's uniform, even if the color of it be something strange to them."

"Almost you tempt me to wish that I had been born to the white uniform," I answered, in a daze with the nearness of her, the witchery of her, the nameless charm of her movement, the subtle intoxication of her voice.

"Almost you tempt me to regret," she retorted with gracious raillery, "that the men of your cold and stubborn north cannot be moved to change by a woman's arguments."

"It is to unchangeableness we are moved by a woman, Mademoiselle."

I spoke with an exaggerated lightness, to avoid a too significant seriousness.

"Is there ever, I wonder, a risk of such steadfastness growing tiresome," mused Mademoiselle, turning contemplative.

The swift change discomfited me. I turned my words to platitudes on the beauty of the house, the garden, the landscape. And presently I found myself established an honored yet confessedly hostile guest, in the Seigneury of Cheticamp.

But the situation, seemingly so quiet and easy that it might aspire to last forever was, in fact, a bubble of rainbow tissue blown to its extreme of tension and ready to shatter at a breath. When the breath came it was a light one, truly, yet how the face of the world changed under it. I awoke one morning in the first rosiness of dawn, with a kind of foreboding. I went to the window. There in the misty bay, hove-to at a discreet distance from the wharves, was a small schooner, signalling.

The signals were unintelligible to me, which meant it was my duty to be concerned with them. I remembered that there was a flag-pole on the knoll back of the house. With a sudden leaden sinking at the heart I realized that Mademoiselle's brother was at last in evidence; and I could imagine nothing that would more embarrass me than that I should succeed in capturing him. After watching the signals for some time and wondering if it were Mademoiselle herself manipulating the unseen replies, I decided that there was nothing to be done but parade my guard openly along the coast. Then, if she should persist in stupidly running his neck into the noose, I would have to do my duty and pull it.

"Oh, why has she a brother!" I groaned, cursing him heartily; but straight revoked every curse, remembering that but for his delinquencies I had never come at all to Cheticamp.

"Mademoiselle," said I gravely, bending low over her cool brown fingers, and noticing that they trembled, "I have been watching the signals from yonder ship."

The brown fingers were withdrawn nervously.

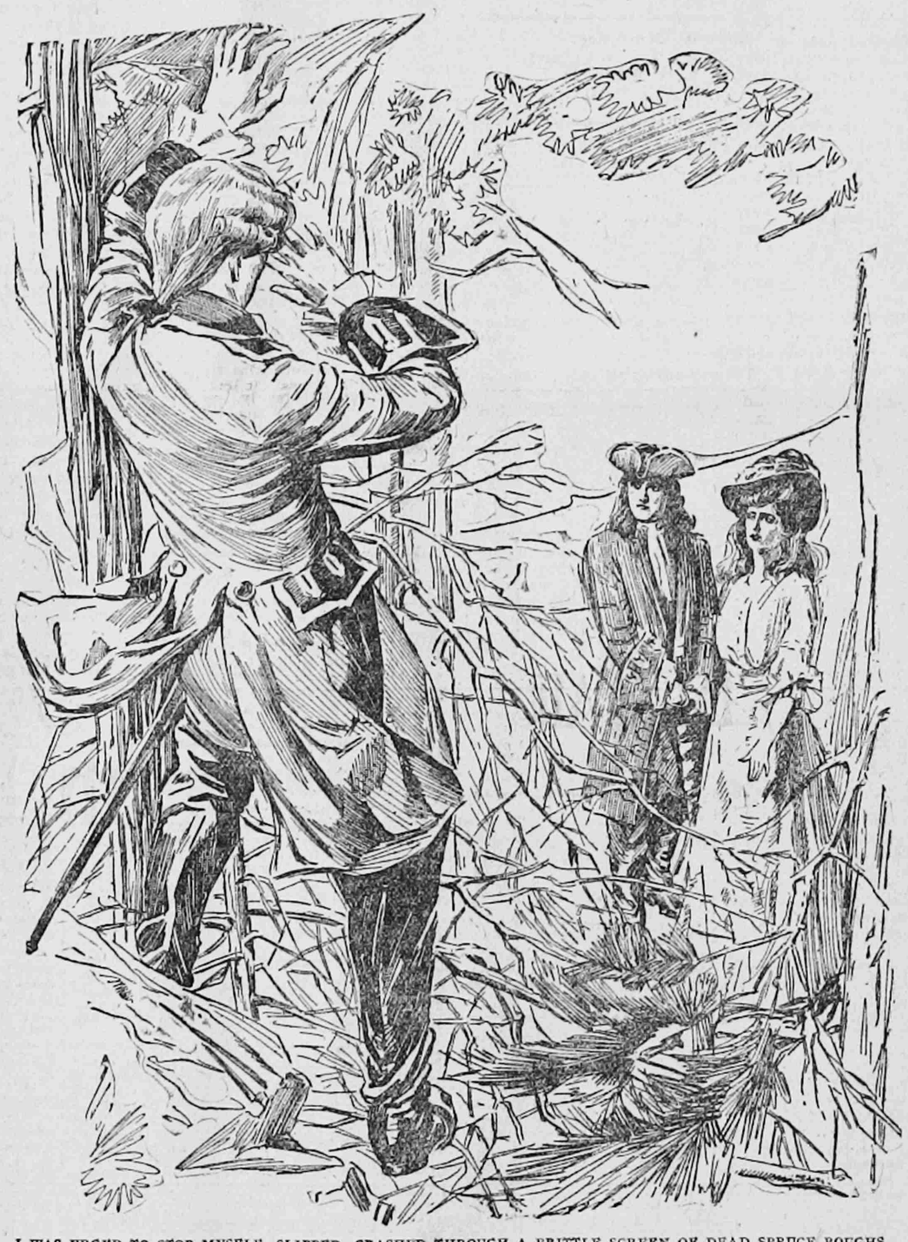
"They were quite unintelligible to me," I continued, "but I readily infer that your brother has returned and is on shipboard."

A strange look (was it relief?) passed over her face. Then she nodded her dark head as if in frankest acquiescence.

"Allow me to say at once that I must try to capture him, but that I earnestly hope that I shall not be so unfortunate as to succeed."

At this her eyes softened upon me. Never had I seen anything, in life or in dream, so beautiful as the smile upon her lips. But I went on: "My men will patrol the coast, but they are few, and I cannot, of course, prevent your messengers eluding their vigilance and communicating with Monsieur le Fevre. I am glad I cannot prevent it. I doubt not you will warn him that all this neighborhood is strictly watched. My men would at once recognize him if they saw him, from the descriptions they have had."

Then, as I watched her face, my restraint was shaken.



I WAS URGED TO STOP MYSELF, SLIPPED, CRASHED THROUGH A BRITTLE SCREEN OF DEAD SPRUCE BOUGHS

The love which I had not till that day let myself realize laid mighty grasp upon me. The long-chained passion crept into my voice, and it changed, trembling, as I continued:

"Oh, you can prevent him falling into our hands. I beseech you, let not that evil come upon me, that your brother should be my prisoner."

"Thank you, Monsieur," she said very simply, putting her hand in mine, with a confidence like a child's. Her eyes searched my very heart for a second.

"I think, with such assistance, we can elude your vigilance, Monsieur."

But on the instant her look changed to one of the deepest gravity. As I so often thought of that look since, it was a surrender in part, in part a sacrament.

"The South Cove, at noon," she said, with a sort of sob; and flushed, and ran hastily into the house.

"Of course," said I to myself, and half aloud to the roses, "she means that I am to act upon her word, and take my men safely out of the way to South Cove before noon, leaving the North Harbor, where the ship has gone, perfectly secure. She knows that I can act, with a clear conscience, on so definite a piece of information as that. She knows that there is nothing else for me to do. She sees that I love her. She trusts me. And she trusts my wit to comprehend her subtle devisings. Irène, Irène."

And I swung gayly down toward the village through an air more light and sweet, through a sunshine more radiant clear, under a sky more blue, than ever before my travelled senses had encountered.

I breakfasted at the inn. By the time my messengers had got hold of my scattered men, and given them my orders to report to me at South Cove, it wanted but an hour of noon. To South Cove was an hour's brisk walking, and I set out, with my orderly at my heels. He was a trusty, discreet fellow, with whom I was wont to talk out a little; but to-day my dreams were all-sufficient to me, and I would not let the lad so much as stir his tongue. Arriving at the point where the upland dipped down to South Cove, a narrow inlet thickly screened with woods, I noted the hour as exact noon. Then, liking well the look of the leafage below me with the glint of water sparkling through, and craving no company but my own and my thoughts, I bade my man wait where he was and watch the roads both ways, and halt the others as they should come up.

The path down through the trees was green-mossed, winding and steep. I went swiftly but noiselessly. Near the foot, as I was just about to emerge upon the beach, the sound of voices below caught my ear. I essayed to stop myself, slipped, crashed through a brittle screen of dead spruce-boughs and came down, erect upon my feet but somewhat jarred, not ten paces from the spot where a lady and a cavalier, locked in one another's arms, stood beside a small boat drawn up upon the shingle.

It was Mademoiselle, and the man her brother, as I saw on the instant from the likeness between them. They had unlocked their arms and turned toward me, startled at the sound of my fall. Mademoiselle's face went white, then flushed crimson, and drawing herself up she confronted me with a look of unutterable scorn, mingled with pain and reproach. Apprehension and amusement struggled together in the face of the young Seigneur.

For my own part, I had realized on the instant the whole enormity of my mistake. Mademoiselle had told me the plain truth, staking everything on my love, trusting me utterly. My heart sinks now as I recall the anguish of that moment. I had but one thought, to justify myself in her eyes. I sprang forward, stammering.

"Forgive me, Mademoiselle, I did not understand—I quite misunderstood. Believe me, I never dreamed—"

But, shaken and humiliated as she was, she did not lose her presence of mind. She played another card boldly.

"Captain Scott," she said, as if this were the most ceremonious meeting in the world, "this is my fiance, Monsieur de St. Ange."

By great good fortune I had wit enough to seem to believe her. In fact, perhaps my belief was too well simulated, for the expressions that passed over her face in the next few seconds were inexplicable to me and mightily increased my confusion. But toward this "Monsieur de St. Ange" I felt most cordial.

"Delighted, Monsieur, I am sure," I exclaimed, bowing low, while he bowed with equal ceremony, but in silence.

"I congratulate you," I went on, terribly at a loss. Then I looked at Mademoiselle, who had turned away white and indifferent.

"There has been some mistake," I continued desperately. "That you should wish to see your betrothed is, of course, to me, sufficient explanation of your presence here. But others might think I should inquire more searchingly into an enemy's purpose in visiting a place like this. My men are in the neighborhood; I will go at once and withdraw them. But I beg you, Monsieur, to withdraw yourself as speedily as possible."

I backed away, striving in vain to win a look from Mademoiselle. As for her brother, he was most civil.

"I thank you for your great courtesy, Monsieur," he answered, the corners of his mouth restraining themselves from mirth. "Much as it would be to my pleasure to know you better, I am aware that I might find it inconvenient. I shall comply as speedily as possible with your most reasonable request."

At the foot of the path, finding that Mademoiselle was quite oblivious to my presence, I turned and made all haste from the calamitous spot. When I found my men, I hurried them off toward Cheticamp, with an eagerness that hinted at a fresh and important clue. From the inn, I sent them in parties of two, on errands of urgency that would take them as far as possible from South Cove. Then, hurrying back to the Seigneury, I awaited, in sickening suspense, the return of Mademoiselle to a belated meal.

I found her in the supper-room, putting flowers on a table that was set for—only one.

"Supper is served, Monsieur," she said, as I came in.

"For me alone?" I gasped, feeling that the world had come to an end.

"For Monsieur," she answered.

"Tell me," and the tone made her look at me quickly, with a deference not before observable in her manner. "Tell me at once where Mademoiselle le Fevre is gone."

"Certainly, Monsieur, certainly. There is no desire to deceive Monsieur. Mademoiselle and her maid have removed to the inn at Cheticamp, where Mademoiselle intends to reside till she can join Monsieur her brother at Louisbourg."

I heard her through, then rushed from the room, snatched up my hat, and sped down to the inn of Cheticamp. I fear that the civil salutations of the villagers whom I passed went outrageously unregarded.

My demand was urgent, so within a very few minutes of my coming I was ushered into Mademoiselle's parlor, and with a thrill of hope at the omen I noted that it was the same room which I had occupied on the night of my arrival at Cheticamp, the same dear room through whose hop-garlanded window I had made such bold and merry counterfeit with Mademoiselle in her disguise. But not nourishing to hope was Mademoiselle's greeting. I had not dreamed so small a dame could ever look so tall. Her slim figure was in the gown of creamy linen which she had worn when I met her in the rose-garden. Her small, strange, child-like face was very white, her lips set coldly and less scarlet than their wont, and her eyes—they were almost terribly bright and large, with a steady gaze which I could not fathom.

"To what do I owe this honor, Monsieur?" she asked. "It is much——"

But I was rude in my trouble.

"Why have you fled from me, Mademoiselle?" I interrupted passionately. "Why have you left your own home in this way. I will leave it at once—for you shall not be driven from it."

"My home, Monsieur? It is your house. I will not be a pensioner on your bounty."

How had she found this out? I was in confusion.

"What—what do you mean, Mademoiselle?" I stammered.

"I mean, Monsieur," she said, with ice and fire contending in her voice, "that all these days, when I thought I was playing the hostess, in a home belonging either to my brother or to the English Government, I have been but a beggar living on your charity. I know that you are the owner of Cheticamp House and all in it, it having been taken from us to give to you."

I was in despair over this further complication; but this was not the time for finding out the betrayer of my secret.

"I had hoped that you would never know, Mademoiselle," I protested. "But it is not of that I would speak. Forgive me, I beg you on my knees, for the stupid mistake, the unpardonable mistake I made this morning. And oh, count it something that I did my best to remedy the error, so that no harm came of it."

The anger that flamed into her eyes was of a beauty that did not delight me.

"Doubtless you did your duty, Monsieur, as a servant of your Government. Doubtless honor required that you should betray the trust so foolishly reposed in you by a silly girl. You would have taken my brother, and through his sister's folly. I cannot feel very keen gratitude for the generosity which suffered my fiance, whom you did not seek to go free."

Light began to struggle in upon the darkness of my brain.

"Your fiance!" I returned quickly. "Could you think for one moment I did not know that was your brother?"

Her face changed marvellously at this declaration.

"I knew your purpose then," I went on. "But forgive me, forgive me, for not understanding you before. I was not worthy of the simple trust you placed in me. I thought you meant me to understand that I should take my men to South Cove at noon to have them out of the way. I thought it was a piece of your daring strategy—and I was proud because you trusted my stupid wits to follow your plan. I thought it was to save me the embarrassment of openly letting your brother go. I thought—oh, I thought myself so wise—and I was so cheaply careful of my duty. Can you forgive me? You know, you must know, in the light of what I did afterward, that if I had only understood your words in all their uncalculating faith, no power on earth would have prevented me keeping myself and my men as far as possible from the South Cove."

Her tense attitude relaxed. Her figure seemed no longer so portentously tall.

"It is I who must ask forgiveness," she said softly, holding out her hand. I seized it in both of mine, and dared to kiss it fiercely, hungrily—and marvelled to find that it was not at once withdrawn from such an ardor.

She was looking down, watching, but not seeming to see, how my hands held both of hers. For myself, I knew that the joy of life had come to me; but I could find no word to say, so wildly ran my blood. After a moment's silence, she said musingly:

"I don't think I ever could deceive any one. I am sure I never did deceive any one in my life—but once, oh, yes, once." And here she lifted up her face, and flashed upon me a challenge of dancing eyes and mocking mouth.

"No, indeed," said I. "The maid who came to my window did not deceive me for a moment when afterward I met her in the rose-garden."

"Oh," she gasped, with a little sob, while her face grew scarlet. "You knew all the time? It was horrid of me—too horrid to think of. Oh——"

At this point it seemed to me that she was looking for a spot to hide her face; and taking base advantage of her confusion I drew her into my arms, and let her blushes fly to cover against my coat. Never before, in my opinion, had the King's uniform been so highly honored.

"To my window you came that night, my lady," I whispered, "but it was to the door of my heart you came."



## NEXT WEEK: The "Mysterious Landlord"

By Richard Le Gallienne